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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GEORGETOWN 000406

SIPDIS

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WHA/CAR
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CARACAS FOR DAO AND LEGATT
PORT OF SPAIN FOR DEA AND LEGATT
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12598: DECL: N/A
TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF SAWH ASSASSINATION

REF: A.GEORGETOWN 372

[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 205
[1](#)C. GEORGETOWN 137
[1](#)D. GEORGETOWN 111

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: More than one week has passed since the assassination of Agriculture Minister Satyadeo Sawh, with little progress on apprehending the killers. Various theories are circulating in an effort to explain why he was targeted, and the ruling PPP has publicly insinuated the involvement of the opposition PNC/R. The GOG has requested assistance from the USG, Canada and the UK, apparently without consulting key law enforcement figures, including the Minister of Home Affairs and the Commissioner of Police. END SUMMARY.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ambassador met April 24 with Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr. Roger Luncheon, then later with President Jagdeo, to discuss the GOG's request for security related assistance in the wake of Sawh's killing. Jagdeo and Luncheon essentially admitted that the public's patience with the GOG's performance on security is wearing thin, and they are looking for a response that "captures the public's imagination". The GOG has also asked Canada and the UK for help.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Jagdeo's mood was somber, with a visibly furrowed brow. Minister Sawh's killing has clearly hit senior GOG officials hard. Their psychological moat that made them feel separated and protected from Guyana's security problem has vanished. According to Luncheon, Jagdeo has just about exhausted the Guyana security forces' investigative capabilities and so they are forced to seek greater international assistance. Post's impression is that Sawh's killing has really woken up senior GOG politicians to the loss of state control over the country's security.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Luncheon followed up with a written request. BEGIN TEXT OF LETTER:

Subsequent to our meeting today, April 24th, 2006 in my office, I write to record the more salient features of my presentation and details of the request for assistance by the Government of Guyana to the Government of the United

States of America.

The Government of Guyana recognises that the assassination of Minister Sawh has created the gravest threat to our democracy. Significantly, there are other threats associated with the existence of the criminal gang in Buxton and the intellectual authors of their crimes. Also the loss of the large number of AK-47 weapons from the military is still unexplained and recovery unrealised.

It is in that context that the Administration is appealing for assistance in a number of areas including:

- ¶1. Expanding Investigations into the loss of the AK-47 weapons from the military and leading to the recovery.
- ¶2. Enhancing the Criminal Investigation Department's investigation into the murder of Minister S. Sawh and his family.
- ¶3. Provision of Crime fighting equipment for an elite force.

The Administration highly appreciates the current assistance being offered and anticipates a timely response as this time of great threat to democracy and public safety in Guyana.

END TEXT OF LETTER.

¶5. (SBU) Notably, in follow-up discussions with the Minister of Home Affairs, Gail Teixeira, the Commissioner of Police, Winston Felix, and the Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defense Force, Brigadier Edward Collins, Post has learned that none of them were consulted prior to dispatching this request. Rather, the request reflects what President Jagdeo, Luncheon and the Cabinet want during this moment of sorrow and

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possibly panic.

THEORIES

¶6. (SBU) EmbOffs have heard a great many theories since April 22 about the motive behind Sawh's killing. They can be divided into three schools of thought:

¶A. Political. A militant, presumably Afro-Guyanese anti-government faction wants to gain greater political power but feels it cannot do so through Guyana's democratic process. The GoG is peddling this theory, and the GoG leadership is paranoid about a treasonous cadre of current and former military and police officers. This militant group is centered in Buxton, a coastal village approximately six miles east of Georgetown that is essentially beyond state control. A corollary to this theory is that Sawh was targeted in revenge for the January killing of prominent Afro-Guyanese journalist and rabble-rouser Ronald Waddell. To this end, the Joint services have engaged in a series of searches of Buxton, which have netted night vision goggles, military uniforms, and other pieces of military equipment. Ballistics tests performed at spent shells from the Sawh murder scene prove that the same weapons were used in the February 26 Agricola/Eccles massacre and another gruesome shooting/beheading in Agricola in March 2005. Notably, Luncheon fueled the political angle when he publicly mused in the April 27 post-Cabinet briefing that unspecified members of the PNCR have contacts with the bandits in Buxton. However, he explicitly stopped short of linking the PNCR to Sawh's murder.

¶B. Sawh involved in criminal activities. Sawh was said to be close with criminal Salim Azeez, a suspected money launderer and alien smuggler. Azeez financed a fish farm, Newline Aqua Farm, which appears to be a money laundering operation. Azeez was previously arrested with several Guyanese and U.S.

passports but later was acquitted of wrongdoing. As Minister responsible for fisheries, Sawh would have had an ostensible reason to meet with Azeez. Moreover, several tuned-in observers from a cross-representation of Guyanese society feel strongly that Sawh was a clean minister relative to many of his peers.

¶C. Sawh took too strong a stand against criminal activity. Some are saying that Sawh took a lead role in urging the Cabinet not to issue forestry permits to suspect concerns, which pitted him against the drug lords. According to this reasoning, Shaheed "Roger" Khan - whose forestry application was mentioned in the 2006 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) - may then have had a hand in Sawh's killing.

PRESSURE MOUNTS ON POLICE COMMISSIONER FELIX

¶7. (U) Pressure has continued to mount on Commissioner of Police, Winston Felix, to resign in the wake of the crime situation. In an April 25 press release, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry added its voice to those who have called for Felix's resignation, expressing "absolute and total lack of trust and confidence in the leader of the police force". Despite speculation that he would not last through the weekend, Felix remains on the job. Some interlocutors suggest that Felix's impending retirement in October makes the potential political fallout of sacking him not worth the effort. Nevertheless, President Jagdeo pointedly called on the police force to produce results at Sawh's April 25 funeral, declaring that "no one can convince me that among the 5,500 [members of the police and army] and all the money that we send in that area, that we cannot find and mete out to them what they deserve for terrorizing our country and our people".

BULLEN